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ABSTRACT

The booklet is the fourth in a series on the ways that child care centers can contribute to the healthy growth and development of preschool children, and focused on is the prevention of bedlam. Bedlam in a child care center is seen to be caused by frustration, anger, too much noise, overstimulation, reaction to teacher, contagion, or change in routine. It is suggested that the teacher reduce the irritants that lead to bedlam by arranging furniture to cut down on disruptive intrusions, careful planning of activities, recognizing individual needs, fixing limits on behavior, coping with a child's frustration, gaining obedience, and preparing children for changes. It is recommended that the teacher handle the disruptive child by dispelling anger, quieting the upset child, using appropriate discipline, and encouraging the development of self control. It is suggested that if bedlam should break loose the teacher should try to understand the cause or causes and use remedies such as playing out feelings or singing. Stressed is the importance of an orderly atmosphere for a successful child care program. (For other booklets in the series see EC 052 600 through EC 052 602 and EC 052 604). (DB)

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AWAY FROM BEDLAM

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preface

The influence of a good child care center is not limited to the children who are cared for, the staff itself, or the mothers who participate. Older and younger brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors, volunteers may all gain from changes brought about by the child care center. In some instances, the neighborhood is brightened up, inspired by the attractiveness of the center, and pride emerges to spark new efforts. School teachers and principals, ministers, and local agencies also grow more helpful, more interested in children.

This comes from the friendliness of the center staff to the whole family and to the neighbors. It also comes from the quality of every aspect of the child care center—the cheerful setting, the good food, the well-organized space for activity, the children's progress in learning and self-control, the experience of helping to improve the center itself and the neighborhood, the resulting good feelings, and a contagious sense of progress.

At one child care center on a dirt road full of deep ruts and holes, with some adjacent yards full of junk and neighboring houses in a run down condition, major changes occurred. The city street department improved the road; the real estate agent repaired and painted nearby houses while resident owners painted their own; and volunteers from the police department cleaned up the junk. Yards bare and full of scraggly weeds were seeded and made neat. It all takes effort, but the response releases new energy.

Thus child care centers have the opportunity of providing massive help for the nation's children through contributing to wholesome physical, mental, and social development, and also to an improved environment for the children. The child in a good center all day will receive good food, exercise, and rest to build a healthy body, as well as assistance in correction of physical problems.

Through constant communication with teachers and aides, language is developed, vocabulary is enlarged naturally, thought is stimulated and a healthy self-concept evolves. Use of toys and other play and work materials involves exercise and development of sensory-motor skills, along with many concepts of color, size, shape, weight, balance, structure, and design. Stories and songs encourage integration of feelings, action, and ideas, while developing imagination.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner or with blocks allows the child to play out his observations of the family and the community. Other children may broaden their ideas and skills through watching and joining in the play.

Neither health, nor adequate mental development, nor constructive social behavior can be guaranteed for the rest of the child's life if the following years do not also meet his needs adequately. But good total development in childhood can provide prerequisites for further growth and can help to prevent the beginnings of retardation, disorganized behavior, early delinquency, and emotional disturbance.

acknowledgments

I owe most to two groups of workers with young children: first, my former colleagues at Sarah Lawrence College, who taught the children at the Sarah Lawrence Nursery School—Evelyn Beyer, long time director of the nursery school, and Marian Gay, Rebekah Shuey, and also colleagues at Bank Street College for Teachers with whom at different times I shared teaching and research experiences. But in addition, I owe much to the directors and teachers of many nursery schools and day care centers across America and around the world. Especially exciting to me were the Basic Education schools of India, initiated by Gandhi and Zakir Hussain; and Bal Ghar in Ahmeddabad, India—a unique integration of the best American nursery school concepts, Montessori principles, Basic Education, and some traditional Indian patterns, organized with a special balance of good structure and flexibility that I came to know as Kamalini Sarabhai's genius.

I am equally grateful to the creative staff of the North Topeka Day Care Center—Josephine Nesbitt and Forestine Lewis, who "dreamed up" the center to meet the needs of deprived children in their area; and among the intercultural group of teachers and directors, Sarita Peters, Mary Wilson, Jan Kemp, Connie Garcia, Chris Smith —each of whom had special talents in handling the children, stimulating and supporting their growth. Cecile Anderson has been especially generous in sharing her unique story-techniques, observations of children's favorite stories, and ways of looking at children's constructiveness and pride in achievement. Among the volunteers, Lillian Morrow was an inspiration to all of us with her sensitive, skilful, and quietly warm ways, and Carol Rousey contributed expert and helpful assessments of the children's speech and language development.

The leadership of the local OEO director, Robert Harder, and later J. A. Dickinson, stimulated staff, parents and neighbors, Girl Scouts, occupational therapy groups in local hospitals to help paint, plant shrubbery, build outdoor play equipment, provide toys so as to make possible a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning and for total development. Shirley Norris, director of Kansas State Day Care, Anna Ransom, wise dean of Topeka day care efforts, and Mr. S. Revely, the local realtor who renovated the neighborhood houses for the Center, all gave time, energy, and warm interest to the development of the Center.

I also want to express my appreciation to the responsive mothers whose progress along with that of their children gave me a new understanding of human potentialities in children and adults of all ethnic groups in America and the urgency of making it possible for these to be expressed.

These guidelines were initiated by Dr. Caroline Chandler, former Chief, Children's Mental Health Section, National Institute of Mental Health, and were supported by PHS Grant R12–MH9266, the Menninger Foundation, and Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia. They were prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Franc Balzer, Director of Head Start's Parent and Child Center Program.

Lois B. Murphy, Ph.D.

AWAY FROM BEDLAM

An advertisement on television shows a harassed mother trying to cope with her house and family when everything goes wrong. A hand begins to build a tower of play blocks. As the tower grows taller, the baby cries, the dog barks, the doorbell rings, and the mother becomes more upset. At the climax, the tower of blocks comes crashing down, the household is in a state of bedlam, and the mother has a terrible headache that can be cured only by the headache remedy being advertised.

Taking headache pills may be the only solution open to this mother once things got so completely out of hand. However, she probably could have prevented the bedlam that drove her to the medicine chest if she had been a bit more aware of why and how children get "wild."

Things can develop into chaos in a child care center as well as in a home. There are more children, all with their own anxieties and needs. The trouble may start with one child who comes to school ready to beat up anybody who crosses his path. Or it may be the frantic climax of an overexciting day when all the children get wound up too tightly.

Whatever the cause, bedlam is the end result of a building up of tensions. The wise mother and teacher who can see the early clues often can soothe the tensions before everything goes to pieces. This ability to prevent total disruption can be seen in many child care centers where the teachers are alert to the signs. When they see a child picking fights with everyone, snatching toys, and disturbing the other children, they calmly move him to a quiet place and give him something to do that will not disturb the other children. If such a child were left on his own, he would very quickly upset so many children that, instead of having to deal with one angry child, teacher may have five or six screaming ones to handle.

Teachers and mothers, alike, may well profit by the old, but true, saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

causes of bedlam

Many different situations can create the tensions that lead to bedlam in a child care center. In this section some of the typical causes are discussed. The next sections will deal with ways to prevent bedlam and suggestions for handling behavior that can result in general turmoil.

Frustration—"We are each going to make our own cookies today," announced the smiling teacher. "Won't it be fun at snacktime to eat the cookies that we cut out ourselves?"

The teacher set on the table two pastry boards with rolled-out cookie dough, two cookie cutters, and two baking sheets. She divided the 15 children into two groups, and the baking project began with high enthusiasm all around. But the promised fun soon turned into tears and fighting. What might have been a satisfying new experience resulted in frustration that led to disorder. The teacher, close to tears herself, wondered what had gone wrong.

In planning the activity, she had overlooked two important things; namely, the long wait for one of the two cutters and the limited skill of young children. Transferring a soft, dough puppy from a pastry board to a baking sheet can

Teacher's comforting words and loving arms soothe upset feelings.

be difficult for inexperienced hands. Heads fell off; bodies crumpled. Some animals ended on the baking sheet looking like nothing but blobs of dough.

During the long wait to use the cutter, some of the more active boys began to shove one another and throw cookie dough around. As inevitably happens, one child was pushed over and began to cry. Others, discouraged at their failure to move their cookies safely to the baking sheet, joined in the crying. The final disaster came at snacktime when the teacher, undoubtedly weary of the whole project by now, forgot she had told the children they could eat their own cookies and refused to allow them to finger through the cookies on the plate looking for the shape they had cut out.

Baking cookies can provide a useful experience for young children if teacher does not expect too much from them. Giving the children cookies that had been cut out in advance and allowing them to decorate their own with cherries or peanuts would be more in keeping with their skills. If cutting is to be done, then teacher should provide more cutters to shorten the long wait or organize some other activity for those waiting to use the cutters.

Some children who race about aimlessly much of the time and have trouble settling down to any one activity are this way because they have trouble keeping up with the rest of the group. They become frustrated at repeated failures to accomplish what the others are accomplishing. Some new children tend to be bewildered, not understanding the activities of the center.

A child may become frustrated because someone else is playing with the toy he wants. He may have to use the toilet and finds someone else using it. Perhaps lunch is late in being served, and he is very hungry. Impatience and frustration go hand in hand.

Learning to wait when it is necessary and learning to try again when he fails are some of the things a child must learn before he can grow into a responsible adult.

Too much waiting brings restlessness and irritable feelings.

Anger—Everyone gets angry at one time or another. A newborn baby will tense his body, turn red in the face, and wail at the top of his lungs when he is hungry and mother isn't right there with his milk. Adults who have gone through the process of growing up in a civilized world still feel anger, but most of them usually can handle it in some more acceptable way. Some people find a long walk will help them simmer down. Woodworking with furious hammering may be an outlet for an angry man, while his wife may be driven to scrubbing the kitchen floor with great gusto and much splashing to get anger out of her system.

Young children, too, need an outlet. They have not yet learned much about directing their anger into other channels. Like the baby, they let off steam in all directions regardless of whether or not it hurts someone else. An angry child may bite, kick, scratch, push, hit, snatch, or throw himself down and bang his head against the floor. In a child care center, if such a child is allowed to continue "blowing his top" in this manner, he will soon have the entire group in a state of bedlam.

Charles was an angry child who showed his feelings by hoarding toys. If he wanted to build a house of blocks, he had to have all the blocks and would grab them from everyone else. It didn't matter if there were more blocks than he could use on the shelves, he had to have the ones the others were using as well. When the other children protested and grabbed their blocks back, Charles would have a thunderous tantrum. If he happened to tangle with another child who felt cross, it ended in a fist fight and the entire group was disturbed.

A visit to Charles' home revealed clearly the reason for his behavior. The home contained only the barest of necessities—no toys—nothing that a small boy could call his own or could share with a friend. Charles had no experience to tell him how to behave with the large supply of materials at the child care center. He naturally wanted everything in sight to make up for the bareness at home.

Sometimes the attitudes of the people at home contribute to a child's anger. Joe was always fighting at the center. When the social worker looked into his home situation, she learned that he was the only boy among several girls. His mother, apparently angry at her own situation in life, bragged continually that she "can beat anybody in the whole world." She called Joe a "bad boy" and made it clear that she preferred her daughters to her only son. Without a father, Joe needed some contact with a man and a great deal of reassurance that he was not a "bad boy," but only a boy who had to learn how to get along with others. A child who is constantly told he is bad, begins to feel he has to live up to his role and act bad.

Sometimes parents have not learned how to channel their anger and, like a small child, take it out on the nearest person or thing. Frequently, it is their own child who receives the blows. Children of such immature adults may come to the child care center with bruises on their bodies where an irate parent apparently took out his anger. When the teacher sees a child abused in such a way, she should report it to the director immediately, and either the director or the teacher should then discuss this at a staff meeting with the social worker or consulting pediatrician.

A child also may be angry because there is a new baby at home, and mother pays more attention to him than to her older child. His life may have changed in some important way, as in the illness of his mother or in being moved to another foster home, and he is angry because he thinks he is being left uncared for. Sometimes a child becomes angry just because he is around a mother or teacher who is always angry.

Anger can be the result of many things. If teacher can recognize anger developing and deal with it before it becomes full-blown, she will be able to rescue the situation before it gets out of hand.

Too Much Noise—Have you ever seen anyone call a dog with a special whistle? He puts a slim metal tube to his lips and blows. As if by magic, the dog runs to his master. There is no sound that human ears can hear, yet the dog's more acute hearing picks up the vibrations, and the dog responds to his master's call.

Children's ears are sometimes more sensitive than adults' ears, although not so sensitive as a dog's. There is often one child who covers his ears with his hands when a fire truck with its siren wailing dashes down the street. Some chil-

Children with sensitive ears often try to shut out scary noises.

dren cringe when a loud clap of thunder rumbles. As excitement mounts in a child care center, the general hubbub of children at play sometimes becomes too much for the child with sensitive ears. When this happens, the sensitive child may move to the outer fringes as if to get away from the noise. Other children may react differently to the noise and become tense, often letting out their feelings, by pushing, hitting, or otherwise being unpleasant.

Young, sensitive ears respond to a loud or harsh adult voice in the same way. If teacher can speak in a normal tone of voice at all times, she avoids the danger of making a child tense.

It is better to arrange the play yard in such a way that one adult is always near each group of children. Then, if teacher sees a child precariously balanced atop the swing stand, she can calmly walk to him and tell him to get down and offer him help in doing so. If she is far away and sees a child in danger, her first reaction may be to shout at him to come down. The panicky alarm may be enough to throw the child off balance and cause the fall that the teacher was trying to avoid.

Overstimulation—Everyone enjoys an active outgoing child. He gives off a zest for living that is appealing. "Luis gets into everything," his mother may complain, yet there is pride in her voice that she has such a bright and curious son.

Yet some of these strong ones who meet life head-on find themselves swamped by the excitement of the child care center. The variety of interesting things to do may, in itself, overstimulate a child who has had very few playthings. Playing with other children in an action game may excite some children so much that they run aimlessly about, bumping into everyone else and giving out loud cries. Even the size of the room may be enough to excite a child whose life has been spent in a cramped apartment.

Tina, for instance, was so overwhelmed by the number of strange children at the center that she shrieked every time a child came near her. Her behavior stirred up others, who thought it was fun to run up to her and make her scream. This could have triggered off general disorganization if teacher had not intervened and moved Tina to a quiet corner where she could relax without being annoyed by the other children.

Some children seem easily stimulated when they are coming down with an illness or getting over one. Noise and activity seem to disturb them more at these times. There also are some children who from birth seem to over-react to excitement.

Contagion—One angry child can turn a peaceful child care center into chaos without even intending to do more than let off a little steam.

Karl arrives with a scowl on his face because his mother won't let him bring his new miniature car to school. He looks around to see where the action is and decides to join a group of girls playing train in the corner. These children have put a few chairs together, donned grown-up hats, and are pretending to ride the train to the store to buy food for their babies. Karl saunters across the room, grabs Elaine's wicker chair and turns it over, tumbling Elaine on the floor. As she runs to teacher in tears, he snatches a ruffled hat from Mamie's head, pulling her hair in the process. More aggressive than Elaine, Mamie leaps at Karl and sinks her teeth into his arm. When he howls in pain, Franco and Tom run over and join the fray. They abandon a truck they had been playing with, and Darlene takes advantage of their temporary absence to take the truck for herself.

By this time the room is in an uproar. Teacher is frantically trying to regain order. Karl is whimpering like a hurt puppy, having long ago forgotten that he was the cause of it all.

In such a way the aggressive actions of one child can infect an entire group if left unattended. Teachers must learn to recognize the signs of belligerence and give the angry child something satisfying to do away from the others until he feels calmer.

Reaction to Teacher—After several weeks in a child care center, Jay's behavior changed. At home he was always fighting with his brothers and sisters. Whenever his mother told him to do something, he responded either with a nasty "No!" or with tears. If she pressed her request, he would scream and stamp his feet. He began to bite his fingernails and had trouble sleeping. Trying to discover why Jay had become so different after attending the center, his mother asked him what was troubling him. He finally told her, "My teacher always yells at us."

The wise mother moved Jay to another center, and within three weeks he was the same cooperative child he had been before. Jay's remark when he came home the first day told his mother she had done the right thing. "My teacher smiled all day long," Jay cheerfully declared.

Whenever a child is extremely aggressive, the teacher immediately assumes the fault lies at home. However, child care children spend most of their waking hours at the center, and it is possible that something is happening there to cause the unpleasant behavior.

Is teacher tired or angry much of the time? Is she tense or worried about something? Is she really in control of her class, or are her directions wishy-washy so that much of the time the children are not quite sure what she wants them to do? Does she allow too much freedom of choice so that the children wander from one toy to another without any real achievement?

When teacher shows she is angry by tense facial expressions or harsh movements, the children often become angry themselves and behave aggressively toward one another. Children's ears are sensitive to hidden meanings in the tone of an adult voice. Even though teacher may think she has controlled her anger at something the children have done, her tone of voice may give her away to the children's keen ears.

If an adult can learn to talk with children in the same voice he would use when discussing an interesting subject with another adult—that is, a voice that is calm, yet definite, that carries the message without any veiled threats—then the adult generally will find the children will listen and respond.

If teacher has close communication with the mothers, she may be able to pick up some tips on how she rates with the children. Conversations with parents may reveal some surprisingly frank observations that a conscientious teacher can use to good advantage in revamping her own approach to the children.

Change in Routine—Whenever there is something different in the program of the child care center, there are always some children who get into high gear and cannot slow down again. This is particularly noticeable in the days leading up to Christmas or another important holiday when much time and effort goes into preparing for the big event. By the time the Christmas party actually

takes place, some children are too keyed up to enjoy it.

The weather can be upsetting. A rainy or blustery day that keeps active children confined to a relatively small area indoors may lead some of the more energetic ones to find their own kind of exercise by beating on the other children. A hot, humid day can make the children uncomfortable and cranky.

An anticipated trip or visitor may also prove to be disturbing to some easily stimulated children.

Even in a normal day there are routine shifts in activities that tend to excite some children. Every teacher knows how difficult it is for some children to tear themselves away from the swings or sandbox when it is time to go indoors. It can be upsetting for a child to be told to put the puzzle away before he has finished it. Moving from active to quiet play, from outdoors to indoors, from play to washing up for lunch, from storytime to naptime—all these shifts can cause hyperactive behavior in a child who is easily excited.

preventing bedlam

It is far more desirable to stop disruptive behavior before it disrupts the entire group of children. Here are some ways the teacher can reduce irritants that may lead to bedlam.

Physical Arrangements—"Brian ran over my doll with his truck. . . Vicky knocked over my garage. . . Carlos dumped his puzzle all over the book I was reading." Every teacher is familiar with such complaints. Children always seem to be getting in one another's way. A certain amount of intrusion cannot be avoided. Accidents will always happen, especially to lively youngsters who sometimes forget to think about other people while having fun themselves.

Teachers can arrange the furniture of the center to cut down on disruptive intrusions. Sometimes the room arrangement is such that one of the rooms must also be a passageway into other rooms. If this is the case, floor areas in the corners, away from traffic, should be reserved for building with blocks, playing with cars, or keeping house. Tables should be off to the side so that the children are distracted as little as possible by people walking through. If possible, doors connecting other rooms should be kept closed to discourage children from running from one room to another.

A well-planned room has a quiet corner away from traffic where block buildings are less likely to be knocked over.

Ideally, each room should connect to a central hallway or some public area so that there is no traffic through the rooms. Even then, areas for quiet play should be separated from active play areas to reduce interruptions.

Where a child sits may have a lot to do with his behavior in school. Some people just don't get along together. If there is a clash of personalities, teacher can keep peace by seating the antagonists at separate tables.

Careful Planning—Teacher should plan the day to eliminate unnecessarily long waits which are irritating to young children. After telling the children to finish what they are doing and get ready for lunch, she can watch for those who are ready first and send them in twos and threes to wash their hands so that a jam in the bathroom is avoided.

If lunch service is slow, teacher might try other arrangements to move the food more quickly from the kitchen to the children. Young children are capable of setting the tables and serving some of the food. Their help speeds up the service and shortens the waiting time.

Children also become bored and disorganized when faced with the same toys day after day, while children who are doing challenging things within their abilities are less likely to get into trouble. It is important that the teacher keeps them from becoming bored by providing new and interesting things to do from time to time. One way is to hold back some toys at the beginning and introduce them gradually so that new experiences are spread throughout the year.

To head off frustration, teacher should be sure the children are capable of doing the activities she suggests. If one child repeatedly fails in activities the others can handle confidently, it might help if he joins a younger group for a while. Doing easier tasks successfully will restore his self-confidence.

Difficulties in sharing can be reduced when there are several of the same kinds of toys rather than a large variety of one-of-a-kind toys. This is particularly true in the younger groups when children naturally want to play with the toy they see someone else playing with. If the center can have five or six tricycles or trucks, no one will have to wait too long for his turn.

Sharing toys is less of a problem if there are several of the same kind of toy available.

Recognizing Individual Needs—Richie tugged at Miss Green's dress and pointed shyly to a design he had made with Lego. "That's nice, Richie," she said warmly. "I know how hard you worked, and you really did a good job." Richie had not been able to put the plastic blocks together when he first arrived at the child care center, and Miss Green knew he needed praise to keep on learning.

On hearing a wild war whoop from Denise, she turned her attention to the little girl who was getting steamed up in a racing game with a couple of boys. "I think it is time for you to come over here and put this puzzle together," Miss Green suggested, leading Denise away from the children in the center of the room to a corner table. She knew Denise frequently got overexcited, and if she did not take steps then to slow her down, something would happen soon to upset her and cause a tantrum.

"You had better come over and do a puzzle too, Julian," Miss Green said to the small boy who was busy piling boxes on top of one another and climbing to the top. Julian had just returned after an illness, and Miss Green saw that he was getting tired from such strenuous play on his first day back.

"Teresa, you look as if you could eat iron nails. Are you really that angry because Marilyn bumped into you? Come over here and let's see how hard you can punch Bobo the Clown."

When the children who were playing train with some cartons began to yell, Miss Green moved to their side of the room to see what the trouble was. "Of course, you all want to be engineers, but there are other important people helping to run a train," she told them. "Why don't you let Pedro be the first engineer. Amos can be the fireman; George can be the conductor; Anna Mae can sell the tickets; and Lavere and Danita can be the passengers. Here is some paper you can use for tickets. I'll tell you when five minutes is up and you can change jobs."

In each situation Miss Green recognized the makings of disorder and swiftly moved to prevent it. One child needed encouragement; another needed a chance to work off anger; two needed a quiet time; and a group of them needed some help in learning to share. She knew that each child had special difficulties that made him irritable unless an adult helped him to handle them.

When a child is always out of sorts, teacher might discuss his behavior with his parents in an effort to find out what is troubling him. By comparing a child's behavior at home with his behavior in the center and by exchanging observations, parents and teachers can often find the reason and take steps to correct it.

Fixed Limits of Behavior—Freedom with control should be the aim of a good child care center. This means the children have a great deal of choice in what they do so long as they stay within certain limits that are understood by everyone.

All good child care centers forbid the children to—

throw or destroy toys,

break or deface walls or furniture,

interfere with another child's play,

play with towels, wash cloths, or combs,

throw sand, stones, or any hard object,

bite, spit, hit, push, or otherwise try to hurt another child.

It may take many reminders for the children to learn and remember what they may and may not do. Some will have to be told over and over. "It's so hard to remember," a little boy was heard to murmur after his teacher had moved him to a table by himself because he was throwing sand. Often a child's energy simply runs away with him and he does things he never intended to do.

If teacher is consistent in seeing that every child stays within the limits at all times and if she makes it clear that her actions are intended to help the children learn self-control, not to punish them, then eventually most children will settle into life at the center knowing exactly what is expected of them and what they can expect from their teacher.

Coping with Frustration—James had been riding the tricycle for at least half an hour when Mrs. Robinson told him, "There aren't enough trikes for each of us to have one, James. We have to take turns so everybody has a chance to ride. Now it is Manuel's turn to ride."

James gave up the trike willingly enough, but two minutes later began grabbing at the han-

dlebars, demanding it back. Mrs. Robinson put her hands on James' shoulders in a friendly manner. "You had a long ride, James, and Manuel has not had the trike very long. Later you can have it again. Let's go to the swings and I'll push you as high as the sky." Delighted with the new idea, James ran to the swings for his promised ride.

At Mrs. Robinson's suggestion James had been willing to accept a substitute for the tricycle. At the same time, he was reasonably sure that he would be able to ride the tricycle some other time. He knew he wasn't being asked to give it up forever. Eventually, with repeated help like this, James will be able to share the toys willingly, knowing that there are many kinds of interesting things to do. He will learn that having fun does not depend on just one favorite activity, but on many challenging activities.

Learning to wait for the things we want is an important lesson to learn while growing up. Some children whose parents have not been able to meet all of their needs are so doubtful that their wants will ever be fulfilled that they cannot stand to wait one second. Once a child has assurance that he will get to play with the toy he wants a little later, he is better able to wait patiently.

Learning to do things alone is part of a well-rounded child care program so that children learn to enjoy both solitude and companionship. Some children are happy only when they have someone to play with. They are bored, unhappy, and cranky on the days when all of their friends are away or when they are sick in bed. The child or adult who can enjoy other people, but who also can find satisfaction alone reading a book, or listening to music, or sewing, or woodworking will seldom find life boring.

Gaining Obedience—There are no guaranteed instructions on how an adult can get a child to obey. Generally, the child is more likely to obey if he respects the adult and sees some reason for the order. Nobody likes to be pushed around. Once a child gets the feeling he is being pushed around just to give the adult a sense of power, he will balk.

Here are some tips on gaining obedience in a child care center or at home. These were suggested by Mrs. Anna Ransom of the Family Service Center in Topeka, Kansas.

- Be sure the order is necessary. Do not lock horns over unimportant things.
- Follow through to be sure the order is obeyed. Speak clearly and in positive statements.
- If your first request is refused, repeat the request and give reasons why it must be obeyed.
- If the child still refuses, repeat again, telling the child you will help him to obey if he cannot do it himself.
- If he still refuses, take his hand and lead him into doing what was asked.
- If someone else is involved in the situation, do not interfere, even if you think the child will obey you more readily.

Children are more likely to obey a person who talks to them in a quiet voice, using simple language so that there is no confusion about what is being asked. When you want a certain child to do something, always address him by name. Be sure to allow plenty of time for him to comply. Some children just move slowly and seem to be ignoring an adult's request when they are not.

Never spank, shake, strike, or grab a child in anger at his lack of cooperation. Many children suffer bodily injuries every year at the hands of irate adults. If a child asks why he should obey an order, do not answer, "Because I say so." That is one reason no child will accept.

If there is a Golden Rule to discipline it is this: Be the kind of person you want the child to be.

Preparing Children for Changes—When the routine changes in some way, teacher can help avoid disruptive behavior by telling the children ahead of time what is going to happen. Because periods of change are unsettling to small children, this is a time for teacher to take a firmer hand in directing activities and keeping the group calm.

While excitement may run high after teacher announces that they are going to the zoo tomorrow, there will be less excitement than if teacher waits until the time of departure is at hand and then breaks the news. She can help

prepare the children for the trip by talking about the animals they will see at the zoo or the streets they will cross to get there or where they will eat their picnic lunch. Such preparation makes it easier for the more excitable children to accept the different routine on the day of the trip.

Children sometimes go to pieces when sudden demands are made for them to shift gears. It is easier for them if teacher gives advance warning, as, "it is time to take a last climb on the bars before we go inside for a story." Children need a few minutes to finish what they are doing, and they may need help in putting their toys away and getting ready for the next activity.

Bad weather can change the daily routine by keeping everyone indoors. Children get restless, tense, and disorganized when they have to stay in for several days. It would be helpful if teacher had some special activities planned to keep interest high on these trying days. A rainy day in spring, for instance, might be the ideal time to plant seeds in pots indoors and water them, just as the rain is watering the trees and flowers outdoors.

In many ways an imaginative teacher, who knows that children tend to become uneasy with change, can make the period of change easier for them and provide them with new challenges at the same time.

handling the disruptive child

While foresight and sound planning may eliminate many situations before they explode into bedlam, it is impossible to prevent every outbreak. If the teacher can calm one upset child before he disturbs the entire group, she has kept a minor squall from growing into a widespread storm.

Dispelling Anger—Adrian was furious with his mother because she would not let him bring his dinosaur book to school. He sulked at the entrance to the center and refused to go in. His teacher invited him in and tried to lead him by the hand through the door, but he refused. Finally teacher said in a light voice, "Look, Adrian, we're all making things with play-dough. You could make a dinosaur, couldn't you?"

Adrian finally gave in and took his seat at the table. He molded the play-dough into several quite realistic dinosaurs, which teacher admired. Adrian felt better after that and joined willingly in the rest of the day's activities. His play-dough dinosaurs had brought him the same sort of recognition from teacher that his book would have.

Adrian's teacher had given him a way to let out his anger before he clashed with another child. Some children need to work out their anger in energetic activities like pounding on a peg board, hitting the punch ball, wrestling with a large plastic roly-poly, or stomping on play-dough with a rolling pin. Others may find a half hour at the water table helps them get rid of their ugly feelings.

Whenever possible, teacher should encourage a child to talk about the things that make him mad. This is another good way to let off steam without hurting anyone. "Jimmy doesn't like it when you spit on him, Lionel. You wouldn't like it if he spit on you. *Tell* him to give you back the car."

Of course every teacher knows that even though Jimmy asks for the car, Lionel probably will not give it back until he has had more satisfying experiences in sharing toys. It is up to teacher now to take the car from Lionel and return it to Jimmy with words, like, "We all share the toys here. When Jimmy has played with the car for a little while longer, it will be your turn to play with it, Lionel. While you're waiting, let's see if we can put all the animals inside the barn."

It is important to help a child understand that his feelings of anger are not bad, that everyone gets mad once in a while. Teacher can point out, "Sometimes I feel cross because I'm tired, but I know that I can't be mean to you children. You will have to remember that you can't hurt anybody just because you're mad."

Temper is difficult for many adults to control, and a child must be given time to find other ways to express his feelings. It might be easier if teacher offers some assistance, "Next time you feel angry, tell me about it, and I will see if I can help."

Aggressive boys put their energy to healthy uses when they become "builder-men."

Quieting the Upset Child—Any mother or teacher can vouch for the fact that children do not always respond to words the way the books say they should. When teacher offered Lionel a barnful of animals to play with instead of the car he grabbed from Jimmy, he might have thrown barn and animals at teacher and screamed his head off. He might have snatched the car from Jimmy again and hit him with it. Until children learn more about directing their anger, they are capable of violent behavior when an adult interferes. What does teacher do now?

Lionel obviously is beside himself and will not listen to any more words. He might respond to the secure warmth of teacher's arms. If teacher holds him on her lap and rocks him for a while, it might help soothe his feelings. Some children, however, become more tense if anyone tries to pick them up. They may become quieter if teacher just sits nearby and talks softly. Teacher will have to learn what method will quiet each child.

If a child has many violent outbursts, it could be a sign that he is under some kind of stress. In that case teacher would be wise to call this to the attention of her director or the social worker.

A peaceful time with a book helps hyperactive children calm down before they lose control.

Fighting—Some youngsters, mostly boys, thrive on vigorous competition. It is a way for them to show their strength and masculinity. Without being angry, boys will wrestle and roll together like puppies. Adults usually try to break up such games because they know that sooner or later somebody will accidentally kick someone else in the mouth and the fun fight will turn into a real one.

The natural urge that pushes children into such competitive play is one that needs to be developed to help them live successfully in our highly competitive society. For that reason, instead of trying to squelch this kind of play, it is better for the child care teacher to arrange supervised competition where the youngsters can work out their natural energies in a relatively safe setting.

There are all sorts of contests that teacher can arrange. A boxing match with a referee and rules on where and how to hit might give the feel of a real sporting event. Running and relay races are always good for burning up excess energy.

Teacher must set rules for all rough play. She cannot permit punching or kicking in the stomach or head, and she must remain constantly alert for signs that the boys are beginning to fight in earnest.

How to Discipline—"Spare the rod and spoil the child," goes the old saying. For many years people quoted these words as the formula for child rearing. Like some other old sayings, it had very little truth in it. Studies have shown that children who have been whipped and beaten repeatedly in their early years turn into adults who abuse their children. The cycle continues through the generations with violence producing more violence.

The belief in the "rod" persists. Some parents worry that children who have been coddled and protected too much will not be able to hold their own in a tough inner city neighborhood. Some parents think it takes a sound whipping to help a child remember to follow the rules of behavior. They do not mind if the teacher also uses harsh reminders, such as slapping the child's hands, or pinching him, or biting him back if he bites someone.

Most inner city leaders do not agree with this theory. They feel that the only way the chil-

dren can grow up to a different kind of life is to learn while they are still young that there is another kind of life, that people can get along with one another without resorting to violence. When a child is whipped to help him remember to behave, what he is more likely to remember is the anger he felt toward the adult meting out the punishment. The reason for his punishment is lost in his resentment at the punishment itself.

Many teachers find that the following methods work: when a child misbehaves, he is either taken away from the group or deprived of a toy or privilege until he is ready to play without upsetting the other children. The teacher must always make it clear that she is trying to help him learn not to hurt the other children. He should never be handled in a rough manner. Children have had their arms pulled out of the socket by an adult trying to drag them. If the child needs to be removed, do it firmly, but calmly. Let him know you mean business, but that you are not going to hurt him.

"Until you can learn not to splatter paint all over everybody else, Christina, you will have to come over here away from the others," teacher says leading the child to a corner of the room. Teacher sits down next to her to show that she does not intend to leave her alone with her bad

A friendly tussle can turn into a real fight unless teacher establishes rules.

feelings. "Shall we talk about what made you throw the paint around?"

"I won't let you bite anyone, Jason, and I won't let anyone bite you," assures the teacher. "It hurts too much." While reminding Jason of the rules, teacher also makes it clear that she will enforce the rules if somebody is trying to hurt Jason.

When do you discipline a child? Some people feel that the only person who can successfully discipline a child is the one whom the child trusts. If the child knows the adult sincerely wants to help him control his behavior, he can accept his punishment without lingering feelings of resentment. It requires an extremely strong bond between adult and child to punish without stirring anger. If our methods of discipline upset the child so that he becomes wilder, we have defeated the purpose of the discipline.

Developing Self-Control—Rafael and Julian fought all morning. While cutting and pasting paper, Rafael kept taking Julian's paper, and Julian persisted in punching him each time he did. In the playground they fought over who would climb on the bars first, and before lunch they shoved one another to get to the washstand. Mrs. Williams reminded them over and over of the center's rules of behavior.

Finally at storytime Rafael sat down and Julian refused to sit next to him. He ignored Rafael the rest of the day. Mrs. Williams saw this as an indication of growing self-control. Julian was avoiding Rafael in an effort to keep from fighting with him.

When Rita first asked Charlene for the tricycle, Charlene refused stubbornly. Rita tried to pull Charlene off, and Charlene spit at her. Mrs. Williams tried to persuade Charlene to give Rita a ride, but Charlene agreed only if she could take the bucket that was hanging on the handlebars. Rita was not interested in the bucket, and the conflict was settled amicably. Although still not ready to share willingly, Charlene did show some progress toward self-control when she accepted the bucket in place of the trike.

Self-control is not learned quickly. It develops little by little after repeated reminders and help from patient adults.

when bedlam breaks loose

On those days when everything seems to go wrong, there are a few actions teacher can take to reduce tension and restore a calmer atmosphere.

Understanding Why—Everybody has days when things go wrong in a series of calamities. In a child care center there are such days as well, even when the teacher conscientiously tries to anticipate sources of trouble and prevent it from happening.

One teacher tried to find out why her group was out of sorts. There had been no trips, no visitors, no holidays, no changes in schedule. Nothing particularly exciting had happened to the group as a whole, but many of the children were going through upsetting experiences themselves. Marcia's foster father had died and she was being moved to a new foster home; Paul's aunt had started to work as an aide with the older group and he was somewhat uneasy because of her presence in the center; José had had a temper tantrum in school the day before and when his mother heard about it, she spanked him in front of the class; a new child joined the group; an ill child returned after an absence of several days; and the teacher aide was nome sick. So many disturbing things had added up to a great deal of tension that had an effect on each child.

The presence of a new teacher, particularly if the children had not been prepared for the change, can create turmoil within a group of children. If they are used to rather rigid routines, and the new teacher allows greater freedom, the children are not sure what they should do. More often than not they will all talk at once or run about wildly. It might be advisable for a new teacher to start out holding rather firm control. She may relax it as the children get to know her.

Teachers and directors of child care centers also must remember that staff tensions often are sensed by the children. If the teachers or aides are disgruntled about some new policy, or if there is division between teachers and director, or a teacher and her aide, the children may reflect this anxiety in hyperactive behavior.

Remedies—The teacher whose class was reacting to an accumulation of upsetting experiences calmed the children's anxieties by giving them an opportunity to play out their feelings. She spread corn meal on the tables and put out plastic animals and people. José, who was still angry with his mother, selected a plastic lion, which he buried in corn meal and pretended was hopelessly caught in quicksand. By acting out the situations that worry them, children can help themselves to accept some of the unhappy experiences in life.

Singing is a good quieting down pastime. Many teachers always have a song or two right before lunch when the children are hungry and tired from their morning's activities. Action games or marching to music often bring a scattered group together. On unsettled days the children need more direction, and teacher should have a fairly well-planned program in mind for times when the children are too excited to choose activities for themselves. Small group play limited to only two or three children doing each thing will help keep the children from getting into one another's hair.

Although the entire group seems out of sorts, usually there are one or two ringleaders. If teacher can separate them from the rest to give some individual attention and guidance, the others might gradually slow down to normal.

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An orderly atmosphere is essential if any child care program is to be successful. By learning to recognize the signs of excessive tension building up and by taking positive steps to stop it before it gets worse, the teacher usually can steer the situation away from bedlam. Her ability to do so will maintain the kind of atmosphere that fosters sound child development.

Frustration sometimes is overwhelming.

Encouragement leads a child to try again.

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